

NSA Hampton Roads, Northwest Annex hosts the inaugural Fleet Week Grunt Run

By Katisha Draughn, NSA Hampton Roads Public Affairs

The inaugural Fleet Week Grunt Run, held at Naval Support Activity Hampton Roads, Northwest Annex, attracted 550 participants ranging in age from seven to 60 years old, Oct. 15.

"I thought the entire run was just awesome," said Cmdr. Ellen Duffy, officer-in-charge at Northwest Annex. "We had great volunteers and MWR (Morale, Welfare and Recreation) did a fantastic job with putting this run together. I'm just so happy that we were able to host it."

Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Cesar Borrero enjoyed the run, especially the more challenging obstacles.

"It had a little bit of everything, which makes for a more fun race," he said.

The race consisted of a five mile run, with a 150-yard mud pool, an ammo box pick up station and a 35-foot steep hill. Marines (the drill instructors) from Marine Corps Security Force Training Company were positioned in various locations throughout the run encouraging the participants to keep pressing forward and not give up. There were also signs with interesting facts or questions placed sporadically throughout the base to give the runners something else to focus their attention on during the run.

"The run was designed to push the participants' bodies to the limit, but also provide them with a little fun," said John Lucas, director at MWR Portsmouth and one of the organizers of the event.

MWR and the Marines began planning for the run in March of this year. As soon as MWR decided on the type of run they wanted to have, they knew the perfect location for it.

"Muddier runs are more popular than your average run," said Lucas. "And considering where Northwest Annex is located, we just knew it would be well suited for this type of run."

Northwest Annex is located in rural Southern Chesapeake on the border of North Carolina. The base sits on more than 3,600 acres with 2/3 in Virginia and 1/3 in North Carolina. Northwest Annex provides a wide array of support services to 10 tenant commands and maintains and operates the largest small-arms range facility in the Mid-Atlantic region.

Ginner's Mate 1st Class Elizabeth Campos was the overall female winner of the run and said that she would definitely participate in the Grunt Run next year. She competes in runs almost every weekend.

"This was probably the best run that I have ever participated in," she said.

Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Nicholas Chuck competed in the run with seven of his friends.

"I really enjoyed it, even that steep hill we had to climb up towards the end of the run," he said.

The mud pool proved to be a favorite obstacle amongst many of the runners.

"My favorite part of the run was going through the mud pool," said Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Michael Adkins. "I was going so fast that I fell in it, but I got right back up and continued to push myself."

Adkins just recently competed in the Warrior Dash in Charles City County, Va. about two weeks ago and was very excited about participating in the Grunt Run.

"Runs like this are fun. It gives you more things to do instead of the same typical runs," he said.

Northwest Annex typically hosts MWR runs a few times a year. In the spring, they hosted the Mud Run, which was also very successful.

"I think runs like this are important because it builds camaraderie and allows the families to participate and cheer on their loved one and just have a good time," said Duffy.

In addition to the run, MWR set up a rock wall, concession stands and the band "Exploding Sun" provided music before and after the run.

"This would not have been the success it was without the help from the Marines," said Lucas.

"And I was so happy with the results from the run. I would have been happy with 300 participants and we had 550. That was just fantastic."